

## ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE FARMER.

The summer wind is milder round the blooming locust trees. And the clover in the pasture is a big day for the bees. And they are bringing home, aboveboard and on the sly, Till they stagger in their buzzin', and stagger as they fly.

They've been a heap o' rain, but the sun's out today. And the clouds of the wet spell is all cleared away. And the woods is all the greener, and the grass is greener still; It may rain again to-morrow, but I don't think it will.

Some say the crops is ruined, and the corn's drowned out. And prophesy the wheat will be a failure without doubt; But the kind Providence that has never failed us yet, Will be on hands one's more at the 'twelfth hour, I bet!

Does the meadow lark complain, as his wings high and dry. Through the waves of the wind and the blue of the sky? Does the quail set up and whistle in a disappointed way.

Er hang his head in silence and sorrow all the day? Is the chipmunk's health a failure? Does he wait, or does he run? Don't the buzzards come around up there, just like they've allus done?

Is they anything the matter with the rooster's lungs or voice? Or is a mortal be complainin', when dumb animals rejoice?

Then let us, one and all, be contented with our lot; The June is here this morning and the sun is shining hot. Oh, let us fill our hearts with the glory of the day, And banish ev'ry doubt and care and sorrow far away!

Whatever be our station, with Providence for guide, Such fine circumstances ort to make us satisfied; For the time is full of roses, and the roses full of dew, And the dew is full of heavenly love that drips from me and you.

—James Whitcomb Riley.

## THE TURNING POINT.

You may say it was by luck or chance that she turned abruptly in her walk, crossed Union square and walked down past the Academy of Music that afternoon. Yet there is no chance. These apparently trivial visible effects have an invisible cause or succession of causes, and Mercy, just at this crisis, was led not by chance, but by some mysterious agency outside herself to join the crowd who were flocking to the afternoon performance of 'The Old Homestead,' and to invest almost her last half-dollar in a seat.

Mercy mingled with the stream pressing through the inner doors, feeling a trifle flurried, for a matinee holiday was new to her. The usher showed her to her seat, far back under the balcony. The subdued light was grateful to her feelings. Her dress was rather passe, and she had lived so long in that dismal street that she had seemed to have no kinship with the bright and beautiful in the life of the city.

She sat facing the stage curtain, with the murmur of voices floating in upon her consciousness pleasantly, thinking that she was giving herself an initiation into a new life. She felt a sensation of relief—half unresisting, that she was to change the old hopeless, monotonous existence soon—very soon—for a new life, of which this bright scene was a foretaste. A question hung in the balance for her to decide. She was to answer to-night. No more poor living on a pittance, in a meager room, with ill-paid 'piece' work until she became dumb and unresponsive through silent endurance. No more lonely, unloved hours, while youth was gliding into premature decline. She was to be loved, cared for; she was to be renewed in an atmosphere of affection. She had been a neglected flower by the wayside, but one had noticed her in her loneliness and reached out his hand to gather her. A soft, pathetic light came into her eyes. She rested down upon the thought. Love had come to her. Who was there in this great city to criticize the terms upon which it had been offered her? He had been so kind, his eyes had been so pitiful. He had called her a drooping violet and had asked her to let him shelter her.

A dreamy languor crept over her, sitting there in that warm, mellow atmosphere. It would be so good to rest from the hand-to-hand struggle. You tell me a woman's pride and self-respect should be always on the watch-tower, but do you not see that this girl Mercy was drained of vital energy at this period, so weary and overworked, as to be at the mercy of any passing temptation? There are infinite possibilities for the soul's renewal from even the deepest depths, but in its passive, unguarded state how easy for it to become victimized.

When the curtain rose up 'The Old Homestead,' with its barn and old well and Ricketty Ann and soft smiling sky, Mercy held her breath for a moment. A breeze from her native New Hampshire hills swept across her spirit. She seemed to inhale the damp, salty odor of the 'meadows' again. When the load of hay and the oxen came into sight she felt like rising in her seat and clapping her hands in memory of times when she, a first edition of Ricketty Ann, in big sun bonnet, had perched on top of such loads, ridden into the barn yard and jumped from her high seat into the haymow. It seemed ages since, and yet she was scarcely twenty-two.

And Joshua Whitcomb! Mercy wanted to get hold of his hand and laugh and cry by turns as the play progressed, for he seemed the embodiment of her father, Squire Rideaway, now long in his grave. Just such a bluff, jovial, good-hearted man he had been, as she remembered him. She joined in the bubbling laughter around her, but hysterical tears threatened to flow every moment.

A new life was flowing in her veins to her finger tips as she sat there ab-

sorbing the invigorating, wholesome thought outflowing from the stage. Talk of church going! Why, the influence was worth that of a score of cut and dried sermons, with all the warm, human sympathy squeezed out of them. To Mercy, in her present unhealthy state of feeling, the moral stamina and sterling uprightness of Josh Whitcomb were like a tonic. There was the contagion of goodness in the atmosphere. Such a production, sweeping its pure, invigorating currents nightly through the selfishness and impurity in the life of the city, like breezes from a snowy mountain upon a fever-tainted valley at its feet, is a veritable means of grace to the thousands and thousands and ten times thousands of weary souls and overwrought brains that come under its influence.

When the curtain rose upon Grace Church, grand and stately in the subdued evening light, Mercy gave a low gasp of pain. She recalled herself, crouching at nightfall, half famished, in the shadow of that lighted church not many months ago, while the self-same joyous bridal chorus, now sounding behind those richly stained windows, throbbled upon the open air. The bridal party had walked out—the bride beautiful, loving and beloved, while she was friendless. Ah, but now she also was beloved by a lover strong and handsome as that bridegroom—but there was no marriage service on the program, and there seemed a grasp of cold fingers about her heart at that thought.

When the curtain fell upon the rustic dance in the old homestead kitchen upon the return of the prodigal, Mercy rose from her seat and moved out with the rest, feeling that she was not the Mercy of three hours ago. The old strong willfulness of her childhood when she was simply a well-fed, healthy young animal, returned to a new form. Her morbid self-pity was scattered. Her pride was in arms. She seemed to feel her father's clear, stern eyes upon her. Why should Squire Rideaway's daughter allow herself to be degraded by pity? Why should she, with the endurance of the Granite State in her blood, and this awakening womanly self-respect leavening her whole nature—why should she accept such love as Clement Rhodes had offered her? She rose superior to the weak craving for affection. 'Love that does not offer honorable terms is worthless,' she thought. She regained the brave fearlessness in which she had first come to the city of battle for her bread. She seemed to put her past ill-luck behind and trample upon it. 'There is something better ahead for you,' a voice within or without seemed to whisper.

'Courage! Courage! Be strong!' The words sounded in her ears as she walked along the street in the early gaslight. 'Be strong! Be strong!' seemed the echo and re-echo above the city sounds and the cry of the newsboys.

She stopped suddenly before her own reflection in a mirror in the lighted window of a millinery store. She was almost startled at the change in her face and bearing since she had met her reflection there a few hours earlier. She was no drooping violet now, but erect and tall, with a vivid color in her cheeks and a bright light in her eyes, instead of the languishing, pathetic expression. The sight set a seal upon her new recognition of her own worth.

A dark face with a pair of honest eyes was reflected over her shoulder in the mirror, but she did not heed. She walked on with quick elastic step and turned into a shabby street, the strong, broad-shouldered figure followed her at some distance.

She closed the door of her lodging house after her and went up to her room. The man halted a moment, and walked past slowly, as if in some uncertainty.

Mercy lighted a lamp and removed her hat and cloak. She looked around upon her room, with its frayed carpet and scanty furniture, with a new regard. Here she stood mistress of herself once more. The weak, wilted woman, ready to bestow herself upon a lover for the asking; had disappeared. The play had been an elixir of life to her.

Clement Rhodes was coming that evening. Ah, there was his step now upon the stairs! There was a shade of easy assurance in his light tap, she fancied, as she opened the door wide for him to enter. He stood facing her, hat in hand, a well-made, well-dressed man, with something in his face which denoted a character above the male average, in spite of the contradiction of his act.

'Mercy,' There was a new impression of respect in his tone. 'How changed you are! You look like a queen. I am half afraid of you.'

His eyes expressed admiration and regard, but the underlying self-confidence was not shaken. This change was due to his influence, he thought, with true masculine self-esteem.

Mercy felt this and was stung by it into sudden disdain of her old weak self and of him.

'Do I look like a queen?' she asked, with a touch of quiet sarcasm. 'I feel like one just at present. I am changed. The poor, weak girl you took pity upon has gone forever and Mercy Rideaway is here in her stead—here to stay.'

Clement felt somehow at a disadvantage, yet he was slow to comprehend this sudden metamorphosis. He was not ignoble, but selfishness had overgrown his higher nature.

Then Mercy Rideaway needs no

pity?" he said in puzzled inquiry.

'Neither pity nor a love that asks me to compromise myself,' she returned steadily. 'I was weak, nervous, unstrung,' she went on hastily. 'You came, you took advantage of my weakness—you, a strong man of position, who ought to be a protector of the weak—you would have compromised a friendless girl and broken up her peace of mind, instead of helping her to regain her feet, as you would have another man help a sister of yours. I suppose your world calls you a good man, but you are not noble through and through. I do not respect you, and I dispise my old self thoroughly for listening to you.'

The man of the world changed color at these home truths. He had been charged upon so unexpectedly by a brave, beautiful, brilliant woman, instead of meeting the 'drooping violet' who had taken his fancy, that it is small wonder he was nonplused.

'I ask your pardon,' he said genuinely. 'You have taught me a lesson. I thank you for it.'

'I can scarcely thank you for your lesson,' she rejoined quickly. Her outraged pride was stinging her sorely.

'I would give much to revoke it,' he said seriously.

'You cannot!' she retorted. With a last regretful glance and bow he left the room without another word.

Mercy stood still a moment, with those burning cheeks and flashing eyes, listening to his retreating steps down the stairs; then she began to walk up and down the room rapidly. 'Courage! Be strong!' seemed to sound over her shoulder.

There was another and heavier step upon the stairs presently, and a brisk rap at the door. When she opened it a big strong man with embrowned, kindly face was standing there, and the honest eyes that had been reflected over her in the mirror of the millinery store were regarding her keenly.

'Mercy Rideaway?' he questioned, half dubiously.

'Yes; I am Mercy Rideaway,' she returned with a curious prescience hovering about her, as she opened the door wide and he stepped into the full lamplight of her room.

'Yes. I knew I was not mistaken,' he said, continuing his scrutiny of her face. 'That's the Rideaway nose, sure enough, and you've got Aunt Deb's mouth and chin.'

'Who are you?' cried Mercy, impetuously.

'Sam; your brother Sam. You can see the Rideaway features, can't you?'

'Yes! yes!' she cried, as she saw the reproduction of her father's honest face. 'You're brother Sam. I would know you for a Rideaway anywhere. We heard you were dead long ago, killed in the mining explosion.'

'Well, I wasn't. I've been mining and speculating and fighting my hard luck for years, and finally the jade turned around and shook hands with me. Everything I touched prospered. I started East to look you up. Got as far as New York yesterday, and, as good luck is on my track, went into the Academy of Music this afternoon, got a squint at your face, and followed you. Didn't you see me looking over your shoulder in the glass where there was so much toggery in the window?'

'No,' said Mercy, faintly. She was overcome by a multiplicity of emotions, and was crying softly, with her face on Sam's shoulder. 'Why? why is this how you welcome a fellow?' he said, in a rallying tone, patting her head, while there were tears in his own voice.

'Perhaps I'm crying for joy,' she whispered.

'Then that's all right,' rejoined Sam. 'I can wait till you get ready to laugh.'

'That your bean I met outside?' he queried, when Mercy again lifted her head.

'No,' returned Mercy, rather sharply.

'I asked him if Mercy Rideaway lived here, and just said, in case he had any objection, that I was your brother from Colorado.'

'I hate him!' said Mercy, then hid her face again on Sam's shoulder. 'Oh, Sam, I'm, so glad, so glad you come!' she sobbed.

'Sam didn't understand women very well, but his instincts were all right.'

'Remember how you used to go fishing with me in the lake brook when you were a little tot,' he whispered, reminiscently, 'and how you helped me build loads of hay, and what a little tyrant you were when you took a notion, and how you cried to ride on the ox yoke between old Buch and Bright?'

Mercy began to laugh through her tears. 'Yes! yes!' she assented, brightly, as the old memories rushed to the front; 'and don't you remember how I pushed you off a slippery log into the lake brook, and how you walked home dripping, and I pattered on after you carrying the trout, and feeling sort of ashamed?'

'They sat until nearly midnight talking over the past.'

'I've got money,' Sam said, confidentially, 'and I'm going to spend it on you Mercy. You shall have lots of dresses and ribbons and laces and things, and—with a comprehensive glance around the poorly furnished room—you shall have a nice place to live in.'

'And I want to take music lessons, learn and study, and be equal in every way with other girls,' supplemented Mercy eagerly, feeling all this as balm to her wounded pride, though she did

not try to analyze the sensation. \* \*

Clement Rhodes spoke the truth when he told Mercy that she had taught him a lesson, but he himself did not understand the full significance of the remark.

He met her the other day in her becoming street suit, walking with her brother. Her face was glowing with the most attractive of all beauty—that of noble expression. Her step was buoyant.

As their eyes met his hand went to his hat involuntarily, but the quality of Mercy's glance, as she withdrew it and made some careless remark to her brother, ignored him completely, and he passed on feeling that he had been given the 'cut direct.'

The heart of man's like that delicate weed that requires to be trampled on boldly indeed. If it give forth the fragrance you wish to extract—And since that cut Clement Rhodes finds himself thinking of Mercy continually.

He is likely to sue very humbly for her love one day, for he was never ignoble—only selfish; but whether Mercy will recover sufficiently from her wounded pride to listen to him is not for this historian to foreshadow.—Isabel Holmes, in New York Mercury.

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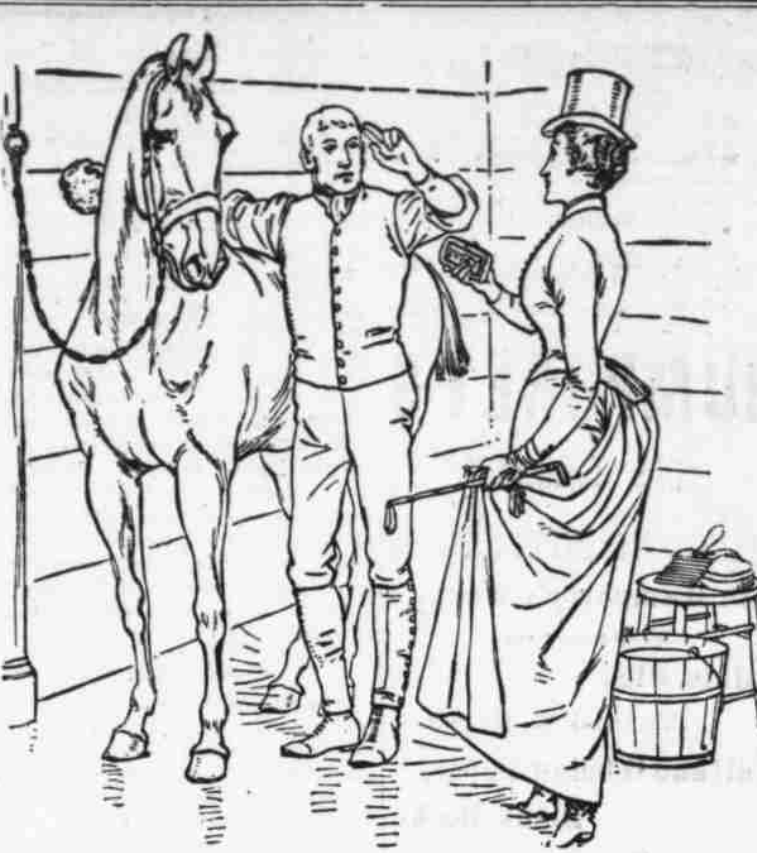
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